

Mauve Studi♥s Animati♥n

♥ Where the
★ Stars Rest ♥

Graduati♥n Film
Pr♥ject Thesis

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Declaration by the Student

I, **Vedanga Nag**, a student of **UPES School of Design**, specializing in **Animation and VFX**, hereby declare that the thesis project titled “**Where the Stars Rest**” is my original work. This project has been carried out in partial fulfilment of the requirements for my degree.

I confirm that this work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for any other academic or professional qualification. Any references, sources, or contributions have been duly acknowledged.

I understand that any form of plagiarism or academic dishonesty will result in disciplinary action as per the university’s policies.

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Date: 8th May 2025

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vnag', written in a cursive style.

Certification by the Mentor

This is to certify that the thesis project titled “**Where the stars rest**”, submitted by **Vedanga Nag**, has been carried out under my supervision and guidance. I confirm that this work is original and has been completed in accordance with the academic standards set by **UPES School of Design**.

I have reviewed the project and found it to be an authentic contribution to the field of Animation and VFX.

Mentor’s Name: Prof. Priyam Chatterjee

Designation: Adjunct Professor, Animation and VFX

Department: UPES School of Design, Animation and VFX

Date: 8th May 2024

Signature:



Acknowledgments

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to everyone who has supported and guided me throughout the journey of creating “**Where the stars rest**”

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Vedanga Nag

Abstract

“**Where the stars rest**” is a 3D animated short film that explores the journey of grief, memory, and acceptance through the story of two brothers—one of whom has passed away. Set against the vast and surreal backdrop of space, the film follows the surviving brother as he struggles to cope with his loss, experiencing an emotional transformation that mirrors the five stages of grief.

Through abstract and symbolic storytelling, the film visually represents grief as a journey from deep blue—a color of sorrow and longing—to yellow, the embodiment of warmth, memory, and the enduring presence of loved ones. The lost brother, though gone, is never truly absent; his essence lives on in the light he leaves behind. This is symbolized by the transition from darkness to a golden glow, reinforcing the idea that we carry our loved ones forward within us.

The film is crafted in 3D animation, with a minimalist yet evocative art style that emphasizes emotions through color, movement, and lighting. The aspect ratio shift from **4:3 to 16:9** mirrors the protagonist’s internal shift from isolation to acceptance. The soundtrack plays an equally vital role, beginning with a sorrowful, melancholic tone before gradually rising into a hopeful crescendo—symbolizing the moment of realization that love and memory transcend loss.

The goal of “Where the stars rest” is to convey that our loved ones are always with us, not just in memories, but as a part of who we are. Their light lives through us, shaping our journey, guiding us forward. That light—that **yellow**—is their presence, forever shining within us.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Thesis

Grief is a deeply personal experience, yet it is also universal. Everyone, at some point in their lives, faces the pain of losing a loved one. “Where the Stars Rest” was created to explore this emotional journey through animation, using symbolism, colour, and abstraction to convey the process of mourning and acceptance.

The central theme of the film is that the ones we lose never truly leave us. They live on within us, in our memories, in the love they shared, and in the light they left behind. This idea is visually represented by the transition from blue to yellow, with blue symbolizing sorrow, isolation, and longing, and yellow embodying warmth, remembrance, and hope.

This thesis serves to document the entire process of bringing this story to life—from initial concept development to the final execution. It outlines the artistic and technical decisions made, the challenges faced, and the research that informed the film’s approach. More importantly, it seeks to highlight the power of visual storytelling in conveying deep emotional experiences, proving that dialogue is not always necessary to communicate complex feelings.

The significance of this film lies in its ability to connect with audiences on a deeply emotional level, using animation as a medium to express what words often cannot. In an era where many animated films prioritize spectacle, “Where the stars rest” aims to offer something different—an introspective and visually poetic experience that leaves a lasting emotional impact.

1.2 Research Context

Animation has long been used to explore profound emotions, but grief is often depicted through realistic or dialogue-driven narratives. Films like *Coco* (2017) and *Up* (2009) address loss through cultural storytelling and character interactions. However, *Where the Stars Rest* takes a different approach—one that leans into abstraction, symbolism, and visual metaphors rather than conventional exposition.

This aligns with contemporary trends in experimental and symbolic animation, where emotions are conveyed through artistic expression rather than direct narrative explanations. A key reference for this approach is *Flow* (2024), an animated short that employs fluid animation, color transitions, and movement to depict personal transformation. Similarly, *Where the Stars Rest* explores grief through non-linear storytelling, surreal imagery, and an evolving visual language that mirrors the emotional journey of loss.

By incorporating abstract space, symbolic transitions, and a considered approach to color theory, the film contributes to a growing body of work that challenges traditional animation techniques. Many mainstream films rely on dialogue to articulate grief, but this film instead immerses the audience in an experiential narrative, making them feel rather than simply understand. Additionally, the exploration of aspect ratio as a storytelling tool reflects the protagonist's shifting emotional state, reinforcing the idea that grief is neither linear nor confined to a singular expression.

1.3 Scope of the Film

This film aims to explore the experience of grief through a poetic, non-verbal medium, using animation as its primary form of expression. Rather than presenting a linear narrative or offering solutions, the story embraces abstraction and symbolic storytelling to reflect how each person processes grief differently. The emotional tone is quiet, reflective, and deeply intimate, focusing on the internal world of a young boy grappling with the loss of his brother.

Technically, the film is created using 3D animation in Blender, with a minimalist visual style to emphasize emotional clarity over visual complexity. The treatment style relies heavily on visual metaphors, slow pacing, and silence, allowing viewers to immerse themselves in the protagonist's internal journey. There is no dialogue; instead, colors, lighting, camera movement, and music become the primary narrative tools.

The aspect ratio begins in 4:3 to create a feeling of confinement and emotional suppression, and gradually expands to 16:9 as the character opens up and begins to process his emotions. This shift mirrors the transition from sorrow to acceptance. The room setting acts as the bridge between imagination and reality, while color design (primarily blue and yellow) symbolically represents grief and hope, respectively.

Sound design and score play a major role: Blue's music is melancholic, grounded in piano and ambient textures, while Yellow's themes are lighter, featuring bells and gentle melodies. The contrasting musical cues help delineate the emotional and symbolic differences between the brothers.

Overall, the film uses animation not as spectacle, but as an introspective tool—an emotional lens through which the audience can reflect on their own experiences with grief.

1.4 Objectives

Where the Stars Rest seeks to explore grief as an experience rather than a problem to be solved. It does not offer answers or closure but instead invites the audience into a journey—one that acknowledges the complexity and deeply personal nature of loss. Everyone processes grief differently, and the film embraces this by creating an open space for reflection rather than guiding viewers toward a fixed resolution.

Though the film unfolds in a child's world, it is primarily intended for adults. Its abstract and symbolic approach allows viewers to engage with grief on their own terms, making it a deeply personal experience for each individual. The film remains accessible to younger audiences, but its core themes and artistic choices are designed to resonate with those who have encountered loss in their own lives.

The film aspires to push the boundaries of traditional storytelling by relying on visual metaphors, color theory, and aspect ratio shifts rather than dialogue or conventional exposition. It aligns with the broader movement of experimental and symbolic animation, offering an emotional journey that is more about feeling than understanding. By using abstraction and carefully crafted visual language, the film encourages audiences to interpret its meaning in their own way, reinforcing the idea that grief is not a linear process but a deeply personal experience.

Through this approach, Where the Stars Rest hopes to provide a contemplative and immersive experience—one that lingers in the hearts of viewers long after the film ends.

Chapter 2: Literature and Contextual Review

2.1 Inspiration and References

The foundation of *Where the Stars Rest* is shaped by films that explore grief, memory, and personal transformation through strong visual storytelling. While many films approach loss through dialogue and exposition, *Where the Stars Rest* takes inspiration from stories that use silence, abstraction, and visual metaphors to convey emotion.

Primary Inspirations

Nirjara (2023) and **One Small Step (2018)** both explore grief in deeply personal ways—one through the bond between brothers and the other through the loss of a dreamer. *Where the Stars Rest* merges these two emotional cores. From *Nirjara*, the film takes the sibling relationship and the internalized experience of grief. The younger character's struggle to understand loss mirrors the protagonist's emotional journey. From *One Small Step*, the film borrows the theme of unfulfilled dreams. The yellow brother resembles Luna, an aspiring astronaut whose journey is cut short. The film's space and rocket theme serves as a metaphor for longing and remembrance, mirroring how Blue, the protagonist, processes this loss. By blending these influences, *Where the Stars Rest* crafts a story that reflects how grief is experienced through memory, dreams, and the bonds we carry forward.

Visual & Aspirational Inspirations

Flow (2024) serves as both an artistic and aspirational influence. Its use of movement, environment, and silence to convey emotion inspires the film's approach to non-verbal storytelling. Beyond that, *Flow*'s success—having won the Oscars—demonstrates what animation can achieve when it moves beyond conventional narratives.

By drawing from these influences, *Where the Stars Rest* aims to take audiences on an introspective journey, not to provide answers but to create a space where emotions unfold naturally.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The foundation of *Where the Stars Rest* is built on key storytelling and animation concepts that enhance its emotional depth and visual impact.

Visual Metaphor & Symbolism

The film uses light and color as metaphors for grief and remembrance. The transition from deep blues to vibrant yellow represents the protagonist's emotional journey. Inspired by color theory, this transformation signifies moving from sorrow to acceptance.

Non-Verbal Storytelling

Instead of dialogue, the film relies on character animation, cinematography, and music to convey emotions. This approach aligns with the principle of "show, don't tell," making the story universally relatable.

Surreal & Abstract Animation

Fluid animation and abstract transitions depict memories and emotions, reflecting the non-linear nature of grief. This technique, often used in experimental animation, allows for deeper audience engagement.

Aspect Ratio as Narrative Device

The film starts in a 4:3 ratio, visually restricting the protagonist's world, then expands to 16:9 as he finds acceptance. This subtle yet powerful shift reinforces emotional storytelling through composition.

These principles shape *Where the Stars Rest*, ensuring that every visual and technical choice supports the film's emotional core.

2.3 Industry Trends

The animation and VFX industry has embraced powerful storytelling techniques that push the boundaries of emotional and visual storytelling. Where the Stars Rest aligns with several key trends seen in recent acclaimed animated films:

1. Emotional & Poetic Storytelling

Animated films are increasingly exploring deeply personal themes. Movies like *Soul* (2020) and *Coco* (2017) use animation to tackle grief, memory, and the afterlife in a heartfelt way. Similarly, *Where the Stars Rest* navigates loss and healing through symbolic and abstract storytelling.

2. Non-Verbal & Universal Narratives

Films like *The Red Turtle* (2016) and *Flow* (2024) rely entirely on visuals and sound to communicate emotions without dialogue. *Where the Stars Rest* follows this trend, using music, color, and movement to express its themes.

3. Stylized & Abstract Animation

Movies such as *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* (2018) and *I Lost My Body* (2019) demonstrate how unique visual styles enhance storytelling. *Where the Stars Rest* blends realism with abstraction, using surreal environments to reflect the protagonist's emotional state.

4. Aspect Ratio & Cinematic Framing

Films like *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014) and *Everything Everywhere All at Once* (2022) use shifting aspect ratios to enhance storytelling. In *Where the Stars Rest*, the transition from 4:3 to 16:9 represents emotional transformation, mirroring the protagonist's journey from grief to acceptance.

By embracing these industry trends, *Where the Stars Rest* contributes to the evolving landscape of animation as an emotionally resonant and visually innovative medium.

Chapter 3: Concept Development

3.1 Logline and Synopsis

Logline:

In the boundless void of space, a grieving boy embarks on a journey of acceptance, discovering that while we cannot hold onto grief, it holds us in its embrace—and that those we lose live on within the light they leave behind.

Synopsis:

In a vast and surreal cosmic setting, two brothers, represented as glowing spirits, share a bond of joy and playfulness until one of them fades away, leaving the other alone in the emptiness of space. Struggling to cope with the loss, the remaining brother, now aboard a lone spaceship, confronts his grief as memories of his sibling begin to manifest. What starts as frustration and resistance slowly transforms into a journey of reconciliation, as the presence of his lost brother pushes him to confront his sorrow and find a way to move forward. Through this emotional odyssey, he begins to understand that loss leaves behind more than just pain—it carries a light that lingers within.

Music

The music should start sad, a grieving music. Slowly interacting with the elements present in the film. Pacing rises and conflicts arise. Later in the final part, the music becomes calm. Symbolism of letting go. Music instruments are piano and strings. No drums.

3.2 Themes and Motifs

1. Grief and the Five Stages of Loss

The film visually represents the five stages of grief (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance) through abstract storytelling:

- Denial – Blue isolates himself in the spaceship, refusing to acknowledge Yellow's presence.
- Anger – Frustration builds as he tries to reach Yellow but fails.
- Bargaining – Blue desperately attempts to interact with the past, clinging to memories.
- Depression – A moment of surrender as he grieves his loss.
- Acceptance – Yellow becomes the sun, and Blue embraces his emotions, moving forward.

2. Light as Memory

- Yellow symbolizes the love and presence of those we lose.
- The transformation into a sun represents how memories never truly fade—they evolve into guiding lights.

3. Isolation vs. Connection

- The spaceship represents Blue's emotional detachment.
- The final grassland scene shows his emotional release, surrounded by warmth and openness.

4. Silent Storytelling

- No dialogue, relying on visual and musical storytelling.
- Body language, lighting, and composition communicate emotions universally.

3.3 Character Design

Blue Brother:

- Wears a navy-blue collared t-shirt with an astronaut sitting on a yellow moon design.
- Has black hair, neatly combed.
- Wears round glasses.



Yellow Brother:

- Wears a bright yellow polo t-shirt with the same astronaut-moon design.
- Black hair, slightly messier and more playful in appearance.
- Wears a yellow cap.



Blue Spirit (Spiritual Form of Blue Brother):

- A glowing, soft blue humanoid figure.
- Large, white glowing eyes, but no facial details.
- Fluid and ethereal, appearing semi-transparent.



Yellow Spirit (Spiritual Form of Yellow Brother):

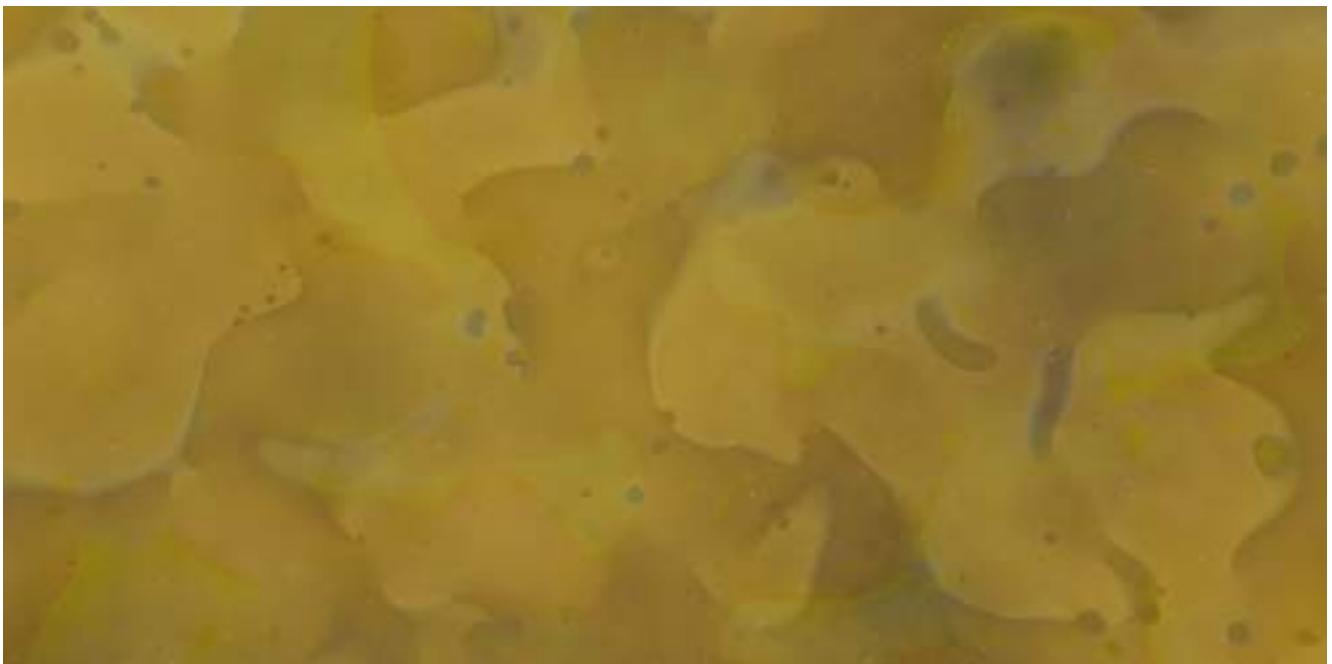
- A glowing, soft yellow humanoid figure.
- Large, white glowing eyes, but no facial details.
- Fluid and ethereal, appearing semi-transparent.



3.4 Environment Design

Abstract World (Space)

- The abstract world is depicted as space, created using a watercolor aesthetic.
- Initially, the space is blue, representing the beginning of the journey.
- By the end, the space turns yellow, symbolizing transformation and resolution.



The Room

A shared bedroom with two beds and two study tables, reflecting the personalities of the brothers.

Though the room is real, the blue brother imagines it as the inside of a rocket, blending reality with his imagination.

Yellow Brother's Side:

- Organized and studious, with a strong interest in rockets and astronomy.



Blue Brother's Side:

Messier, filled with creative elements like music and art supplies.



Rocket Cockpit

- A fabricated environment with two chairs and an assortment of random buttons.
- Has a plastic-like appearance, reinforcing the idea that it isn't real.
- This setting is a product of the blue brother's imagination, further connecting to his creative nature.



Mountain Top Grassland (Final Version)

This environment went through multiple iterations—originally conceived as a vast grassland, then changed to an urban park due to technical challenges in modeling vegetation. However, the final version reverts to a simplified mountain top grassland, blending emotional depth with visual simplicity. A bench, two trees, and a distant horizon evoke serenity and introspection. The elevation adds symbolic weight—suggesting peace and spiritual closure. This minimal yet meaningful setting preserves the original emotional intent while resolving earlier production hurdles, making it a fitting location for the film’s final scene of acceptance.



3.5 Props

Photo Frame

- A framed picture of both brothers, symbolizing their bond.
- Serves as a key emotional prop in the story.



Rocket Toy

A small toy rocket, initially perceived as the real spaceship in the story.

By the end, it is revealed that the entire space journey was imagined, and the rocket was just a toy.

Represents the blue brother's imaginative world and his connection with his sibling.



3.6 Visual Style

The film follows a fully 3D animation style with a painterly approach in certain environments.

Abstract World (Space):

The environment has a watercolor texture, giving it a soft and dreamlike appearance. Initially, the color palette is dominated by deep blues, but towards the end, it transitions to warm yellows, symbolizing a shift in the narrative.

Realistic Elements:

The room and grassland maintain a stylized realism, ensuring the audience connects emotionally with the characters. The materials and lighting emphasize depth, making the world feel tangible.

Plastic Aesthetic:

The rocket cockpit feels like a toy, with glossy, plastic-like buttons and a simplified design, reinforcing the idea that it is imagined rather than real.

Soft Lighting & Atmospheric Effects:

The film uses soft lighting with subtle volumetric effects, particularly in the abstract world, to enhance the ethereal mood.

Chapter 4: Pre - Production

4.1 Script

The scripting process began in December 2024 and concluded in the first week of February 2025, spanning three drafts. Over time, the story evolved significantly, with changes made to key scenes and the ending to enhance emotional depth, symbolism, and clarity.

Changes in the Ending

The film initially concluded with Yellow sitting beside Blue on the bench before fading away, symbolizing acceptance. However, this was changed to a more abstract and emotional transition, where Yellow transforms into the sun, then into light, and finally merges into Blue's heart. This shift reinforced the idea that memories and love never truly fade but instead become a part of those left behind.

Refining Key Emotional Sequences

One of the most significant changes was the midpoint emotional climax. In an earlier draft, after the scene where Yellow hugs Blue from behind and Blue cries, the tear transitioned into the abstract world, where Blue was curled up, holding a small yellow ball—a metaphor for his grief. The ball then floated into his chest, symbolizing acceptance. However, this felt too detached from reality. Instead, the scene was rewritten into a real-world sequence, where Yellow disappears, transforms into the sun, and then moves toward Blue's heart, transitioning directly to the park scene in reality.

Each draft refined the pacing, ensuring that the emotional beats landed effectively while maintaining a dreamlike yet personal tone. The final script strikes a balance between symbolism, emotional realism, and a structured narrative flow, making it a deeply immersive experience.

4.2 Character Modeling

The character modeling process took place from mid-January to the end of February, with careful attention given to each stage to maintain visual and emotional consistency. The workflow included several key steps: sculpting, modeling, retopologizing, cloth simulation, hair modeling, UV mapping, texturing, rigging, and weight painting.

The Blue Brother was the first character to be developed, serving as the base model. Since both brothers share similar physical features, the Yellow Brother was created using the same base, with minor tweaks to distinguish them. This approach significantly streamlined the modeling process while ensuring they remained visually connected.

For the Spirit versions of the brothers, a more abstract and ethereal aesthetic was needed. The workflow omitted hair and clothing, focusing instead on smooth forms and glowing materials to give them a translucent, otherworldly quality. Achieving the right level of glow and transparency required multiple material tests to ensure they felt intangible yet expressive.

The character modeling phase was an essential foundation for the film, as the designs needed to support both realistic emotional performances and symbolic storytelling. The balance between realism and stylization played a crucial role in making the characters both visually appealing and narratively effective.

4.3 Asset Creation

Once character modeling was completed, the next step was building environments and props. Each asset was designed to enhance storytelling while balancing technical feasibility.

Rocket Toy and Cockpit

The rocket toy was the first asset created, as it plays a key symbolic role. Its design was kept simple but visually distinct. Using this as a base, the rocket cockpit was built to reflect Blue Brother's imagined escape. Since this world is his creation, the cockpit was designed with minimal detailing, plastic-like materials, and random buttons, reinforcing its dreamlike nature. Reference images from Pinterest helped shape the look.

Room Design

Initially, the idea was to place the room inside the rocket, but this was later changed to maintain a clear distinction between reality and imagination. Instead, the cockpit interior was designed separately and then merged with a base room model. This separation helped ground the story's emotional layers, making it clear that while the rocket is imaginary, the room is real. To enhance storytelling, the room was aged for nine years, filled with personal items that reflect the brothers' personalities. Yellow Brother's side was neat, studious, and astronomy-focused, featuring books, star maps, and a telescope. In contrast, Blue Brother's side was messy, filled with art supplies and music-related items, reflecting his creativity. A lot of time was spent on realistic detailing, including subtle Easter eggs from past films like *Prostastis*, adding depth and continuity to the film's world.

Grassland to Mountain Top Transition

The final scene went through several versions. It began as a grassland, symbolizing openness and healing. Due to rendering difficulties, it was briefly changed to an urban park with minimal elements—a bench, trees, and a lake. However, this lacked the emotional depth originally envisioned. Eventually, the setting was reimagined as a mountain top grassland, combining the natural calm of the original concept with improved visual clarity. The elevated location added symbolic weight, representing peace and emotional closure, while retaining a simple, focused design that supported the film's tone.

Chapter 5: Production

5.1 A Route Less Taken

Unlike traditional 3D animation workflows that rely on detailed storyboards and animatics, I chose an unconventional approach for this film. Given the time constraints and the complexity of 3D production, I decided to break away from the standard pipeline and trust my instincts. Instead of pre-visualizing every shot, I built the scenes first, animated the characters, and only then placed the camera—treating it like a live-action shoot where the actors perform first, and the cinematographer finds the best angles later. This method allowed for more organic scene composition and a dynamic, theater-like experience where the camera acted as another character in the film.

Once the animation was complete, I carefully adjusted the camera angles, ensuring a natural flow between shots. Before cutting between angles, I intentionally left slight pauses, which later proved useful in editing. Lighting was also done on the spot, as scenes were set, rather than as a separate pre-planned stage. Instead of relying on storyboards and animatics, my viewport became my guide, functioning as a real-time storyboard that evolved as the film progressed.

This entire process took over a month, with a strict timeline—each scene had to be completed within a week, regardless of complexity. However, balancing production with my internship at a creative firm made time management a challenge. My work hours were from 12 PM to 8 PM, which meant I could only focus on my film late at night, often working until 4 AM. Sundays became crucial for fast-tracking progress and refining details.

Spending nearly a week on each scene allowed me to deeply understand its pacing and emotional weight. This ensured the film had a natural rhythm, giving the audience enough space to process the emotions of grief. Along the way, I discovered new techniques, such as adding slight camera shakes to enhance realism and introducing subtle breathing by manipulating the character's chest scale values. These small yet effective details added depth to the animation, making the scenes feel more organic and lifelike.

5.2 Rendering

Rendering was done simultaneously with animation. As soon as a scene was completed, the rendering process would begin, usually overnight, running from midnight until around 11 in the morning. If my laptop was free during work hours, I would use that time to continue rendering, ensuring that no time was wasted. Since the film was entirely 3D and highly visual, I knew that rendering would be a significant challenge, requiring careful management of both time and resources.

Each frame took an average of 1 minute 30 seconds to render, and with nearly 10,000 frames, the total estimated render time was around 15,000 minutes (250 hours or approximately 10.4 days). However, this was just the ideal scenario—actual render time stretched longer due to re-renders and optimizations. Some frames didn't come out as expected due to lighting issues, noise, or slight animation errors that only became noticeable after rendering. These frames had to be fixed and re-rendered, increasing the overall time.

Since the film relies heavily on visual storytelling rather than dialogue, it was crucial to ensure that every frame looked cinematic and conveyed the right emotions. I spent time experimenting with lighting, materials, and camera angles to enhance the film's look while keeping render times manageable. Several YouTube tutorials and online resources helped me refine my approach, teaching me optimization tricks like reducing unnecessary light bounces, adjusting sample rates, and using denoising techniques to speed up rendering without compromising quality.

The entire rendering process was done on my MacBook Pro M1 Max, which, despite its limitations, handled the workload efficiently. At times, my laptop would overheat or slow down, forcing me to adjust settings or render in smaller chunks. Despite these challenges, I managed to complete all renders within my timeline, ensuring that the film was visually polished and emotionally powerful.

Chapter 6: Post Production

6.1 The Edit Table

Once rendering was completed, all the frames were imported into Adobe After Effects for compositing. This stage was crucial in refining the film's visual appeal. Additional glow effects were applied to enhance the spirits, ensuring their luminosity felt natural and ethereal. Color grading played a significant role in distinguishing different emotional beats—colder tones for grief, transitioning into warmer hues for acceptance. In some shots, a subtle layer of artificial camera lens blur was added to enhance depth and realism.

All the finalized clips were then exported in 1440x2560 resolution, maintaining a 16:9 aspect ratio. The editing process took place in Adobe Premiere Pro, where the entire sequence was carefully structured. The film's aspect ratio played a significant storytelling role. Initially, a custom cinematic bar was applied to maintain a 4:3 ratio, emphasizing the constricted, grief-stricken world of the protagonist. As the story reached its climax and Blue embraced his emotions, the aspect ratio expanded to 16:9, symbolizing emotional openness and resolution.

Editing decisions were driven by pacing and emotion. Strategic time remapping was used to slow down or speed up certain moments, emphasizing their emotional weight. A few shots were further refined using Premiere Pro's generative extend feature, which allowed minor framing adjustments when necessary. Titles, transitions, and fade-ins were kept minimal to maintain the film's immersive and contemplative tone. The goal was to create an edit that allowed the audience to fully absorb the protagonist's journey without distractions.

6.2 Music and Sound Design

As the edit was coming together, my search for a music producer began. I knew my film had the potential to deliver a strong emotional impact, and using royalty-free music from the internet would not do it justice. While I had experience creating music in Logic Pro, I wanted a professional touch to elevate the film's emotional depth. Music was just as important as the visuals—without it, the story wouldn't be felt, and without the visuals, the story wouldn't be told. Both had to work in harmony.

After consulting several friends, I found a music producer named Sagar, who resonated with the edit I presented. He immediately agreed to compose the score. We had multiple discussions about the tone of the music, ensuring it would not rely on loops but instead be custom-composed with dynamic piano notes. The film required a grief-driven score, using piano, strings, and bell chimes—no drums or beats. Every note had to complement the visual storytelling, shifting with the characters' emotions rather than following a rigid structure. The goal was to begin with a melancholic undertone that would ultimately resolve into a heartwarming, uplifting conclusion.

For sound design, I took charge myself, working in Adobe Audition to create an immersive auditory experience. I carefully layered sound effects (SFX), ensuring they blended seamlessly with the music. Interestingly, I initially refrained from adding ambient sounds to maintain a sense of emotional isolation. It was only in the final mix that I introduced the subtle park ambience, reinforcing the transition to reality. Some foley effects were recorded manually using my MacBook's microphone, adding an organic touch to key moments. The result was a carefully crafted soundscape that strengthened the film's emotional weight.

Chapter 7: Results and Analysis

7.1 Final Film Overview

The completed film, *Where the Stars Rest*, serves as a poignant exploration of grief through the perspective of a 10-year-old child. The narrative journey, deeply rooted in the themes of loss and the complexities of human emotions, aims to create a space where viewers, both young and adult, can engage with the universal theme of grieving.

The film's visual language was influenced by concepts of color theory and aspect ratio manipulation to express emotional shifts in the protagonist's journey. The use of color and changes in aspect ratio were specifically designed to evoke different emotional responses, allowing the audience to feel the transformation in the young boy's experience with grief.

In terms of storytelling, the film focuses on portraying the unpredictable and individual nature of grief, encouraging the audience to interpret the unfolding events in a deeply personal way. By leaving room for subjective interpretation, the film seeks to communicate that grief is not a linear process but a deeply emotional and personal experience.

The final film aligns with the objectives set at the beginning of the project: to create an emotionally resonant work that does not offer simple resolutions but instead invites introspection and connection with the themes of loss and memory.

7.2 Evaluator's Feedback

Throughout the development of *Where the Stars Rest*, I received invaluable guidance from my mentor, Prof. Priyam Chatterjee. At the script stage, he suggested consolidating two abstract animation sequences into one. Originally, there were two separate moments with the big yellow ball—one abstract and one during the climax. He advised merging them to enhance the impact and clarity of the narrative.

For the epilogue, Sir recommended removing Yellow from the grassland scene with Blue, as it would diminish the emotional weight of the farewell. He suggested that Yellow should not be present, emphasizing Blue's sense of loss and closure. This advice significantly improved the emotional depth of the ending.

During the production stage, Sir provided animation feedback, one being on a shot where Blue runs off the cockpit. There was warping as he passed through the door, which he pointed out and suggested smoothing out for a more natural flow. This feedback was crucial in refining the animation and improving the overall quality of the film.

Sir also provided continuous motivation throughout the project, helping me stay focused on the emotional core of the story. His guidance was instrumental in shaping the final film, ensuring that the narrative, visuals, and animation were cohesive and emotionally resonant.

7.3 Evaluation of Success

Where the Stars Rest can be considered successful in its ability to emotionally engage the audience, convey its central themes, and create a cohesive and immersive experience through its storytelling, visuals, and sound design.

The film effectively communicates the protagonist's emotional journey, particularly his experience of grief. By focusing on his internal struggle and his relationship with the concept of loss, the film encourages viewers to reflect on their own experiences with memory and grief. The absence of explicit dialogue allowed for a more subtle narrative approach, with the visual elements taking precedence. This choice made the storytelling more universal, resonating with audiences on a deeper, more emotional level. The pacing, carefully adjusted through feedback, ensured that the key emotional moments were given space to develop, reinforcing the protagonist's emotional arc.

The film's visual style is a key strength, using color theory and aspect ratio shifts to convey emotional depth. The shift in aspect ratio helps to emphasize the protagonist's journey, while color changes reflect his emotional transitions. The abstract animation sequences were reduced as per feedback, resulting in a more focused narrative. The visual metaphors and symbolic use of the yellow ball in the abstract and climax sequences strengthened the themes of loss and remembrance. Additionally, the animation improvements, especially after receiving feedback from Sir, enhanced the fluidity and clarity of the visuals.

The sound design plays a pivotal role in reinforcing the film's emotional tone. The layered ambient sounds and subtle score create an immersive environment, supporting the emotional journey of the protagonist. The sound design reflects both the external world and the inner conflict, allowing the audience to connect with the protagonist's experiences on a sensory level.

In conclusion, the film successfully achieves its intended emotional and thematic goals, offering a reflective and immersive experience.

Conclusion

This film has been a deeply personal and experimental journey, breaking traditional pipelines and embracing an intuitive workflow. The biggest achievement was skipping storyboards and animatics, allowing animation to dictate camera movements. This approach created an organic and immersive visual experience, making each frame feel alive.

Despite its successes, the project faced challenges. Rendering nearly 10,000 frames on a single MacBook Pro M1 Max required strategic overnight scheduling. The transition from a grassland to an urban park was a necessary compromise due to technical difficulties, but it ultimately grounded the story in a more relatable setting. Every element, from environment design to props, was carefully chosen to reflect the characters' emotions and relationships.

Music played a crucial role in elevating the narrative. Working with composer Sagar ensured a fully custom score, relying on piano and strings to guide the audience's emotions. The sound design, handled personally, remained subtle yet effective, adding depth to key transitions between reality and imagination.

Future Work

The film achieves its intended emotional depth, but improvements could be made. Refining character animations, enhancing environmental details, and using more advanced rendering techniques would elevate the final output. A stronger rendering setup or a render farm could significantly improve efficiency.

Industry Relevance

This project showcases an alternative animation workflow, proving that indie filmmakers can create impactful stories with limited resources. The emotional depth achieved through animation highlights its potential in film, gaming, and interactive media. The film's approach to grief and memory sets a precedent for storytelling that relies on visual and musical synergy rather than dialogue.

Ultimately, this project is not just an academic milestone but a foundation for my future creative growth in animation and storytelling.

References and Bibliography

Software & Tools

- Blender – Modeling, texturing, rigging, and animation.
- Adobe After Effects – Compositing, color grading, and post-production effects.
- Adobe Premiere Pro – Editing and final assembly.
- Adobe Audition – Sound design and mixing.
- Logic Pro – Initial music exploration.

Inspirational Films & Animations

- Nirjara. 2023. NID Ahmedabad.
- One Small Step. 2018. TAIKO Studios. Directed by Andrew Chesworth & Bobby Pontillas.
- Flow. 2024. Directed by Gints Zilbalodis.
- The Red Turtle. 2016. Studio Ghibli. Directed by Michael Dudok de Wit.
- Soul. 2020. Pixar Animation Studios. Directed by Pete Docter & Kemp Powers.
- Coco. 2017. Pixar Animation Studios. Directed by Lee Unkrich & Adrian Molina.
- I Lost My Body. 2019. Xilam Animation. Directed by Jérémy Clapin.
- Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse. 2018. Sony Pictures Animation. Directed by Bob Persichetti, Peter Ramsey & Rodney Rothman.
- The Grand Budapest Hotel. 2014. Fox Searchlight Pictures. Directed by Wes Anderson.
- Everything Everywhere All at Once. 2022. A24. Directed by Daniel Kwan & Daniel Scheinert.

Online Resources & Tutorials

- YouTube tutorials on Blender rendering optimizations.
- Various online articles on cinematic camera movements in animation.
- Adobe Premiere Pro's official documentation on time remapping and color grading.

Music & Sound

- Original Score by Sagar (Music Producer).
- Freesound.org – For some ambient and SFX references.

Additional Documents - Script, BTS, Posters,

Script

1. Abstract Space

Opening Scene

FADE IN:

A vast, dark blue space.

A WHITE BALL emerges, glowing softly. It begins to tremble and splits into two smaller spheres: YELLOW spirit and BLUE spirit.

The two spheres orbit each other, spiraling closer, and slowly morph into human-shaped spirits—Yellow and Blue—translucent and glowing.

They playfully chase each other, floating effortlessly in the space. A glowing ball of light materializes between them. Yellow tosses the ball to Blue, and they laugh and they run and tumble through the void.

Suddenly, they pause.

Yellow approaches Blue, arms open. They embrace.

As they hug, Yellow begins to fade, dissolving into particles of light.

- Blue's arms hold nothing as the particles scatter into the void.

Left alone, Blue hovers in silence, his glow dimming.

The camera pans down through the space

2. The Rocket

A sleek rocket ship glides through the emptiness of space.

3. The Room

INT. ROCKET – PERSONAL ROOM – NIGHT

The room is small and cluttered, filled with traces of two lives:

- A bunk bed, one side messy, the other pristine.
- A desk with a framed photo of two smiling boys.
- Height marks drawn on the wall, one marked "Blue," the other, shorter, marked "Yellow."

The camera moves to a wide shot of Blue, floating at the window. His face heavy with grief.

The vast emptiness of space reflects in his eyes.

4. The Yellow Spirit Returns

Yellow Spirit Appears

A faint glow forms behind him. Slowly, it becomes Yellow, who watches Blue silently.

Blue turns and freezes, his eyes wide.

Yellow raises a hand, palm open, reaching out.

Hesitant, Blue lifts his hand to meet it.

Their fingers almost touch—but Blue's hand passes through. He pulls back, confused, and tries again.

Frustration builds as he reaches out repeatedly, only for his hand to pass through every time.

5. The Cockpit

INT. ROCKET – COCKPIT

Angry and hurt, Blue storms out of the room and into the cockpit.

Yellow follows quietly, his glow softening.

Blue slams into the pilot's seat, flicking switches and pressing buttons, trying to focus.

Yellow moves closer, waving his hands in front of Blue's face, trying to get his attention.

Irritated, Blue slams his hands on the console.

Yellow backs away.

6. Reconciliation

The Hug

Blue drops his head onto the console. His shoulders shake as he begins to cry.

Yellow hesitates but then gently moves closer.

He wraps his arms around Blue from behind in a soft embrace.

Slowly, Blue's sobs subside, and the cockpit begins to fill with a warm yellow glow.

7. Yellow Sun

EXT. SPACE

Outside the window, a brilliant yellow light emerges—a massive, glowing sun.

Blue looks up, his tears reflecting the golden light.

He turns back to see Yellow, but he is not there. (The rocket fades out as he turns)

The sun begins to morph, shrinking and forming into Yellow's spirit.
With a joyful burst, Yellow races toward Blue, merging into his chest.
Blue's chest glows, radiating light as he floats in the middle of a now yellow void.

8. Grassland at Sunset

FADE TO:

A warm, golden sunset.

EXT. GRASSLAND – DUSK

The camera pans down to a quiet grassland with a single tree and a bench silhouetted against the horizon.

Blue sits on the bench, gazing at the sunset.

Close-Up: His face is calm, with tears glistening in his eyes.

He holds a small rocket toy in his hands.

The Farewell

Blue places the rocket on the bench beside him, aligning it perfectly with the glowing sunset.

He looks it one last, tender smile.

Blue stands and walks away and we stay with the rocket.

FADE TO BLACK

THE END

BTS

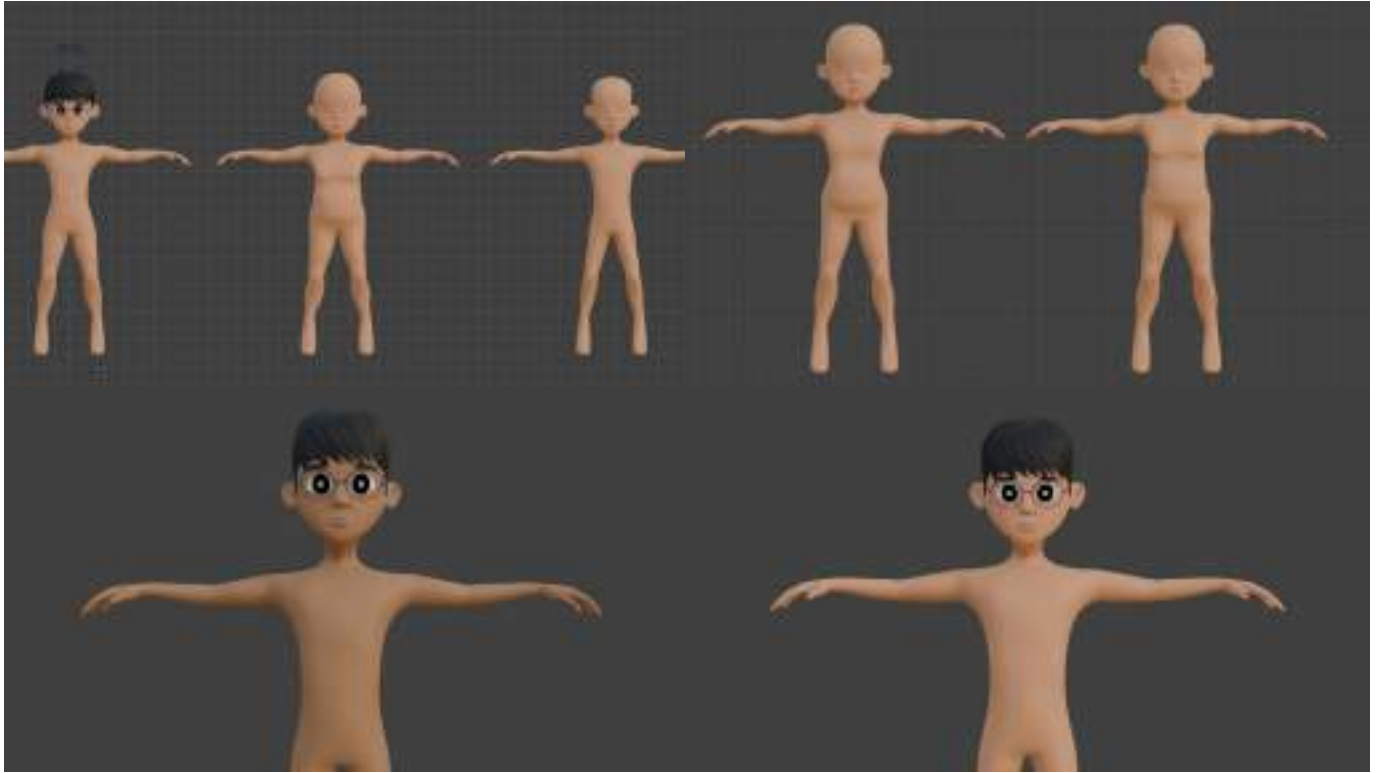
Initial Designs for the grassland



Making of the Room



Blue's Character Variation



Look test of the Glowing Ball



Poster

